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To be realistic, the entire range of American life in urban as well as rural communities should be portrayed in textbooks. There is much concern with the role publishers play in determining textbooks available for use in urban schools, because there is a particular need to describe the special conditions under which minority peoples live in urban areas. To present the urban problems with more accuracy than in the past it is suggested that improved cooperation is needed between city school programs and publishers.

Considerable time as well as large sums of money are needed to accomplish the many revisions necessary in textbook contents. It is suggested that persons who have detailed knowledge of both subject matter and urban living conditions of all groups should help prepare textbook materials.

Few publications include illustrations and data concerning minorities, so it is suggested that publishing companies supply supplementary meterials until textbooks portraying the texts of minorities are completed.

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ACTION PROPOSALS BASED UPON

THE REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TEXTBOOKS

The Research Council of the Great Cities
Program for School Improvement
Chicago, Illinois

March 20, 1964

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ACTION PROPOSALS BASED UPON

THE REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TEXTBOOKS

* * *

Publishers are requested to assure that textbooks reflect more accurately the country's social heritage, particularly in urban areas, by making positive changes in both vocabulary and content. To be realistic, textbooks should portray the total range of American life as it is manifested in urban as well as rural communities. There is a particular need for books used by pupils in larger cities to describe the special conditions under which minority peoples live in great urban areas.

The Subcommittee on Textbooks of the Research Council is deeply concerned with the role which publishers have had in determining the characteristics and nature of textbooks available for use in urban schools. Although it is recognized that publishers have been guided by some educational personnel from large cities who have served as consultants or contributing authors, the subcommittee suggests that the focus on contemporary urban problems should be more specific. To present these problems with greater adequacy, improved liaison is needed between publishers and the great city school systems.

Persons who have intimate knowledge of both subject matter and urban living conditions of all groups should help prepare textbook materials. In this way, there will be greater assurance that the psychological needs of pupils are fulfilled, and effective instructional techniques and the latest developments in subject matter are utilized. Information on the contributions of minority groups can be effectively included in social studies, science, and reading textbooks and in such supplementary materials as films and filmstrips. These can be used not only in the classroom but also in teacher-education programs.

Because of the extensive investments of publishers and school systems in existing materials, it is not economically feasible to abandon any large quantity of materials presently in use or available. It is recognized that the preparation of new materials, including development, production, distribution, orientation of school personnel, and utilization in the curriculum, is a long-range undertaking. Regional differences in culture and mores also must be taken into consideration.

To accomplish the many revisions which are necessary in the content of textbooks, considerable time as well as large sums of money are necessary. For example, to produce a reading series for elementary schools, 5 to 8 years of work and an expenditure of $1,000,000 are required. Revisions in content have also been delayed because publishers have believed that requests for changes have been isolated and that revised books would have relatively limited sales.

Four major publishers have now indicated that they will include illustrations and information concerning minorities in new publications to be released during the next two or three years. However, minority groups could consider these steps as only a token effort. Therefore, the subcommittee urges that

publishers supply specialized supplementary materials during the interim prior to completion of adequate textbooks which effectively portray the role of minorities in American life. Their contributions should be recognized in both printed and audio-visual materials.

In keeping with the recommendations contained in the Report of the Subcommittee on Textbooks dated November 15, 1963, and the foregoing statements, the staff committee proposes that:

I. An advisory committee consisting of three members of the Board of Directors be established.

II. A Committee on Instructional Materials of not more than five persons be appointed from the staffs of members school systems. The member shall have policy level responsibility for curriculum and instruction; their titles might contain either or both of these terms.

III. A liaison committee be established jointly with the American Textbook Publishers Institute to assure that priority is given to the preparation of special written and audio-visual materials needed by large city school systems.

The Committee on Instructional Materials shall represent the Research Council on the liaison committee, which shall inform publishers concerning new needs, the obsolescence of materials, and the necessity for correction of erroneous or misleading statements. In addition, the liaison committee shall suggest other types of improvements and revisions and encourage teams from the Textbook Publishers Institute to visit large city school systems to observe at firsthand problems which teachers face in educating urban children.

IV. The Committee on Instructional Materials shall also have the following responsibilities:

1. Enlist the aid of national professional organizations, personnel undertaking national curriculum studies, curriculum centers, and national foundations in the development of satisfactory, long-range solutions to the problems of education in urban areas and in the preparation of appropriate materials.

2. Act as a clearing house by coordinating the production and exchange of materials among member school systems in the Research Council; keep informed regarding materials being prepared by publishers and individual city school systems; and explore ways in which supplementary materials can be developed locally.

For example, the plan undertaken by the Detroit Public Schools should be introduced in a number of other large city school systems. Projects of this type could help demonstrate that children are exposed to textbooks which truly reflect the conditions in urban centers.

3. Explore and develop means of coordination with both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs to inform prospective and present school personnel regarding written and audio-visual materials that are in use and being developed.

4. Review and evaluate the text and non-text materials now in use by, and available to, the Great Cities Program for School Improvement and recommend areas in which additional materials are needed. The Committee should immediately encourage publishers, large city school systems, or the Research Council to undertake the production of such materials on an interim basis when needs are identified.

5. Review the findings of current research studies that concern the psychological, sociological, and educational needs of urban children to determine coverage of these areas and to utilize results of the studies in the preparation of appropriate instructional materials when gaps exist.